

# NEWS THE CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART

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## MAPPLETHORPE TOUR WITHDRAWN

The Corcoran Gallery of Art has withdrawn the photography exhibition, "Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment" from its summer exhibition schedule.

Christina Orr-Cahall, director and CEO of The Corcoran Gallery of Art, released the following statement concerning the cancellation.

"The Trustees and the Director of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, during the past several weeks, have witnessed a major controversy forming over the National Endowment for the Arts' support of 'Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment,' an exhibition organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art of the University of Pennsylvania which opened there in December, 1988.

"As the oldest art museum in Washington and as one of the three oldest in the United States, controversial art is not new to us. Through the gift of founder William Wilson Corcoran, our institution has been the risk-taker and innovator on the Washington art scene.

"However, in its 120 years of existence, one criterion has always been steadfastly upheld at the Corcoran. Our institution has always remained outside of the political arena, maintaining a position of neutrality on all such issues. In a city with such a great federal presence, this has been essential. Citizen and Congressional concerns, on both sides of the issue of public funds supporting controversial art, are now

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pulling the Corcoran into the political domain. Therefore, with considerable regret, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Director and the Board of Trustees have decided to withdraw from the tour of the Institute of Contemporary Art's retrospective on the art of Robert Mapplethorpe. The choice of an apolitical point of view is our own and we clearly have the right to ensure that position. There were no public funds used by the Corcoran with regard to the Mapplethorpe exhibition.

"The Corcoran's withdrawal from the exhibition's tour is not a comment on the quality of the artist's work. Neither is it an abrogation of the artist's right of free expression, nor is it a questioning of the Endowment's award system. With its withdrawal from this exhibition's tour, the Corcoran Gallery is responding only to the political occasion--the present discussion which fundamentally rests with the Endowment and Congress.

"In The Washington Post of June 7, the National Endowment for the Arts indicated that they intended "to review our process to ensure that Endowment processes are effective and maintain the highest artistic integrity and quality." The Corcoran is pleased to hear of the Endowment working in a responsible manner to address issues of concerned citizens and members of Congress. It is important to clarify the issue of artistic freedom and its relationship to the use of taxpayer money. There are vital issues of inherent rights and public responsibilities. Federal funding for the arts is critical. It is crucial to the success and longevity of our cultural institutions which across the country are having to retrench as funds for the arts become increasingly stringent. The National Endowment for the Arts has been extraordinarily successful in the approximately 80,000 grants it has given in its nearly 25-year history, bringing education, enrichment and joy to untold numbers of Americans.

"William Wilson Corcoran founded the Corcoran Gallery of Art 'to encourage the American genius.' The Corcoran sees its mission as helping in every possible way and not hindering the encouragement of artistic endeavor of all kinds within a climate

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where understanding and wisdom are dominant. We apologize to our members and to the public who wished to see this exhibition in Washington and we trust that you can understand our viewpoint. We invite our Congress and the National Endowment for the Arts to consider deeply the needs for free expression and public funding, while appropriately providing for the cultural growth of the United States."

The Mapplethorpe tour will continue this fall with exhibitions planned at: the Wadsworth Atheneum (Hartford, CT, October 8 - December 24, 1989); University Art Museum (Berkeley, CA, January 17 - March 18, 1990); Contemporary Arts Center (Cincinnati, OH, April 6 - May 25, 1990); and the Institute of Contemporary Art (Boston, MA, June 14 - Aug 31, 1990).

For its summer season, the Corcoran Gallery will present "Japanese Photography in America: 1920-1940." This is a ground-breaking exhibition of magical photographs taken by Japanese living and working in the United States during the two decades preceding World War II. Internment and subsequent confiscation of cameras and recording devices by the United States government during the war years brought this school of photography to an abrupt end. Dates for this exhibition will be July 15 through October 1, 1989. Organized by the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in Los Angeles, the exhibition was made possible by the National Endowment for the Arts with additional funding from the California Arts Council and the City of Los Angeles,

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Cultural Affairs Department. The Corcoran's presentation is made possible by the Professional Photography Division, Eastman Kodak Company and the Japan-United States Friendship Commission.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Debbie Shriver, Public Relations, The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 17th and New York Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006, (202) 638-3211.